

October 4, 2005
Milton, Florida

The Marine Advisory Committee met on the above date with the following members present: Chairman Ken Johnson and members Dan Wakley, Robert Turpin, and Jeff Marker. Also present were the County Administrator (Hunter Walker), County Engineer (Roger Blaylock), Grants Coordinator (Sharon Marsh), Public Works Director (Avis Whitfield), and Marine Extension Agent (Christina Verlinde). Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Marker moved approval of the minutes from the August 2, 2005 meeting; Wakley seconded, and the vote carried unanimously (4-0).

Boat Ramp/Dock Repair Status

Whitfield presented the committee with a list identifying damage to the county piers during Hurricane Dennis. (Attachment in File) He said the list includes the cost of repairs with the original specifications and the cost of repairs with mitigation to improve the piers. Whitfield said the mitigation includes improvements such as larger pilings, longer pilings, and blow out decks. He said he received a telephone call from a FEMA representative prior to this meeting, and the representative is 99.9% sure the mitigation will be approved. Whitfield said the county will issue the notice to proceed and begin construction as quickly as the contractor can start. He said these are the same piers the county just finished repairing from Hurricane Ivan. Whitfield discussed the needed repairs of each location on the list.

Blaylock said Navarre Beach Boat Ramp survived Hurricane Dennis, but the rest of the infrastructure failed. He said there is extensive damage to the parking lot, and it may require a total rebuild. Blaylock said the parking area will remain closed for the foreseeable future. He said he is working with FEMA to finalize a project worksheet for damage in that parking lot from Hurricanes Dennis, Katrina, and Rita. Blaylock said the county has obtained a change order from the contractor, and as soon as the project worksheet is approved by FEMA the contractor will begin repairs.

Blaylock said FEMA has agreed to demolish the existing Navarre Beach fishing pier and contribute approximately \$2 million towards reconstruction of the pier. He said the location of the new pier has not been determined. Blaylock said the county is having discussions with DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) regarding the State Park and their commitment to extend the old pier 300'. He said the pier location may be to the east interfacing with the State Park. Blaylock said this location will move the pier away from the condominiums where there has been controversy between swimmers, surfers, and fisherman. He said Post, Buckley, Schuh, & Jernigan is the project consultant.

Wakley asked if the debris pile from the demolished pier will be removed or left for a marine sanctuary type situation. Blaylock said this has not been determined yet, but the approach he plans to take will be to position the debris as a marine sanctuary.

Wakley discussed the second sandbar off shore that disappeared after Hurricane Ivan. Blaylock said the second sandbar has been intermittent for the past decade. He said the north winds from Hurricane Dennis put the second sandbar back. There was further discussion concerning the undamaged Navarre Beach boat ramp and the destroyed retaining wall.

Blaylock said the county has received the bids for the Dune Restoration project, and the Board will award the contract to Weeks Marine on Monday. He said the county will be receiving bids next week to sift stock piled material in the public accesses on Navarre Beach.

Turpin asked the status of the marine sanctuary. Blaylock said there has been no discussion with the state concerning the marine sanctuary. Walker said the State of Florida would like to give the county the state park and funds to recapitalize it. He said the Board will be discussing the details with the state next week. Walker said he felt the marine sanctuary will be included in these discussions. Blaylock said the remaining dollars that were not allocated and spent on the Marine Sanctuary will probably end up repairing the infrastructure. He said his hope is for the remnants from the old fishing pier to be used as a base for a marine sanctuary.

Public Meeting Issues

Johnson said with the recent hurricanes he felt any productive value that could have come from the public workshop has past.

Oyster Restoration Project

Marker said the Oyster Restoration Project was supposed to start this week, but due to the death of a family member, the project is on hold until further notice. He said the Division of Aquaculture will soon be reporting on the condition of the oyster beds. Marker said most of the oyster beds were destroyed in the hurricane. He said the only bed that survived is along the west bank south of Interstate 10 where Nichols has a lease bed. Marker said Archie Glover boat ramp is the only feasible boat ramp close to the location of the oyster beds that is being replenished. He said he will pass along information regarding the Oyster Restoration Project as it is received.

Other Business/Adjournment

Marker said land acquisition was discussed at a previous meeting. He said there are grants available for land acquisition but he can not see the feasibility of applying for grant funds. Marker said when land becomes available for purchase there is not enough time to apply for grant funds. He said typically grants for land acquisition of this type are small. Marker said there are limited resources in the Boating Improvement fund. He discussed access and availability of the current ramps and future growth. Marker said the committee needs to come up with a plan that will provide some relief in the future.

Turpin said the market is so fast that unless you have the money allocated and ready to make a purchase when property becomes available you will miss the opportunity. He said the only funding sources he is aware of are through the Florida Legislature or the Board of County Commissioners. Turpin said he recently provided some projects to Escambia County for state and federal legislative funding. He suggested writing a summary of the present access conditions and future plans for submission to the legislature for funding to purchase suitable properties.

Johnson said he has researched trends in the real estate market, and the county is experiencing a tremendous inflation at this time. He said he would be hesitant to purchase land now; however, if the land is not purchased now it will eventually be used for development.

Johnson said the Escambia County Marine Advisory Committee use their boating dollars for water parks, and by doing this, they have received several grants. He said water parks can provide areas for man made lakes, fishing, and camping. Johnson said he

felt the Marine Advisory Committee should get away from boat ramps and get into the water parks business. He said water parks can provide adequate parking and top notch services to the user groups.

Wakley agreed. He asked if the Parks Committee and Marine Advisory Committee can combine assets. Walker said the Parks and Recreation Department has not dealt with any capital purchases. He said Marker is on the right track if the committee is interested in boat ramp access. Walker said District 5 has some discretionary recreation dollars and there may be some purchase opportunities. He said a State of Florida goal is to provide water access.

Turpin said a water park is a multi use facility with a small body of water. He said one facility in Escambia County has a boat ramp, parking, and camp sites. Turpin said another site is being developed on 50 acres. He said this second site will have a boat ramp, ball fields, and those sorts of things. Turpin said water parks are attractive because you can bring together wildlife viewing, fishing, and picnic areas. He said he is willing to work on a generic conceptual plan with economic and demographic data that can be used as a selling tool to the Board of County Commissioners, Legislature, and land acquisition grant sources. Turpin said land has to be designated with most grant applications.

Wakley said the first step is to get the land. He said the committee needs to find a way to buy land or improve land the county already owns. Wakley said there needs to be a new project for the next cycle of the Boating Improvement Grant. He discussed installing a boat ramp at Bal Alex Park and under the south end of the Garcon Point Bridge. Wakley said these are two short term projects that will give the county two more boat ramps.

Johnson said Fire and Rescue issues involve water, and he suggested using some funds from Fire and Rescue and some funds from Parks and Recreation to help with the improvements. He requested Turpin do the conceptual drawing to use as a template, and pool funds for land acquisition.

Turpin said under the Chairman's direction, he will provide a conceptual drawing of a water park that will include canoeing, kayaking, picnic area, wildlife viewing, education, camping, and restroom facilities.

Marker said the property next to the Oriole Beach ramp is still for sale. He asked how to come up with available funding for when land comes up for sale. Walker said if the county is going to put in for a legislative appropriation it needs to be done right now. He said Marsh can draft the wording for the conceptual plan, and he has some ideas of where some funding can come from for land acquisition.

Turpin asked if the county knows the level of service of boat ramps. Whitfield said he can obtain the information. Turpin said in the neighboring county's legislative request he provided a percentage of the boating public presently being served. He said it was a very low percentage. Walker asked Turpin to provide a template, and the county will gather information to submit a request to legislature.

Turpin said the Department of Health as come up with a new set of fish consumption guidelines. He said it is on the Department of Health's website. Turpin said there is a tremendous increase in the number of fishes that have mercury consumption advisories. He said everyone needs to be aware of this. Johnson asked if this advisory can be put on the Santa Rosa County website.

The next scheduled meeting of the Marine Advisory Committee will be Tuesday, November 1, 2005 at 5:00 p.m.

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.